

**MINUTES**  
**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Committee on School and Division Accountability**  
**Wednesday, June 24, 2015, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building**

**Welcome and Opening Comments**

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the June 24, 2015 Committee on School and Division Accountability meeting: Diane Atkinson; Christian Braunlich; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James Dillard; Elizabeth Vickrey Lodal; and Joan Wodiska. Dr. Steven Staples, the superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Ms. Atkinson, chairman of the committee, convened the meeting and welcomed the Board members and guests. She also introduced a new Board member, Dr. Lorraine Lange, who will join the Board on July 1, 2015. Ms. Atkinson then said today's meeting would focus on the re-design of the school report card and the revisions to the *Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (Standards of Accreditation or SOA). She said the public comment period for this meeting had been moved on the agenda and would take place after the presentation on state report cards as she thought it would help if those present had the benefit of that information prior to the public comment period.

**Approval of Minutes from the May 27, 2015 Meeting**

Ms. Atkinson then moved on to approval of the minutes from the last meeting. She stated there was one typo in the draft minutes, but that has been corrected. The minutes from the May 27, 2015 meeting were then approved by the committee members as revised.

**Presentation of *Blueprint Virginia: A Business Plan for the Commonwealth***

Ms. Atkinson introduced the presenter for this agenda item, Barry DuVal, president and CEO for the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Mr. DuVal stated that this non-partisan organization is the voice of Virginia's businesses to the Governor's office and to the General Assembly members, as well as those in Washington. He said there are about 230,000 businesses in Virginia, and the chamber represents about one out of 10. There are currently about 200,000 jobs in Virginia unfilled. About 60% of new jobs will require less than a four-year degree but at least a two year degree or some form of certification. In some instances these jobs will be higher paying than those with a four-year degree. At this time there are more workers with high skills than comparable jobs, there are more workers with low skills than there are jobs, but there are not enough workers with middle skills. And that is the challenge facing the nation and Virginia.

Mr. DuVal then said Virginia has other challenges, but he said the organization is speaking with Senators, fixing the regulatory climate, and looking at tax reform and the current administration has embraced many of the *Blueprint's* principles.

He closed by focusing on workforce and education because he said the Board's main task is to prepare the pipeline for the future. He mentioned legislation facilitated by the organization to address workforce and education issues. He also talked about regionalism and said we need to think about regional solutions. There is no region in America growing and prospering without institutions of quality education: K-12 and higher education. Lastly, he said his organization has made some suggestions of system level reform in early childhood education, K-12, and post-secondary and higher education. The organization's K-12 Education subcommittee, chaired by Secretary Dyke, has provided a report which concentrated on four topic areas:

1. Business involvement
2. Teacher quality
3. School improvement
4. Systematic reform

He said the important message the Board members need to hear from him today is that the business community needs to take ownership of the results of education in Virginia. He invited the Board members to attend the Virginia Workforce Conference on October 6, 2015. The theme is *Build Talent Pipeline for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Mr. DuVal thanked the Board for allowing him to make the presentation.

The following questions were raised by and comments made by the Board members:

- A Board member asked him to consider talking to regional superintendents and boards so they understand it is not what each division does, but what they do collectively.
- One Board member said one of the things she finds most encouraging as a Board member is approving STEM programs in localities and their work with the local business community and local community colleges. These groups look specifically at the local needs and create the programs to address those needs.
- One Board member commented that the *Blueprint* was well done. He did mention that he thought civic readiness should have been included as well as some others. In addition, he said some things mentioned required additional funding. This conflicts with the suggestion that the tax rate be lowered. Mr. DuVal said Virginia does need to re-structure its tax system.
- One Board member thanked him for the Chamber's engagement in education. She said she had been very eager for the Chamber to step up and be more involved. Mr. DuVal said he wanted to acknowledge Secretary Dyke and other members of his Board who thought this was important.

Board members thanked him for his presentation.

## Discussion of School Performance Report Card Redesign

Charles Pyle, director of the office of communications for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and Bethann Canada, director of educational information management for VDOE, were the presenters for this agenda item and discussed several key items:

- Results from a survey of stakeholders
- A plan for parental engagement
- Key elements from report cards in Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, and Ohio
- Revision of the report card project timeline

Before that presentation started, Ms. Atkinson thanked those who were present earlier today for the roundtable discussion she facilitated with Dr. Staples and Dr. Cannaday regarding potential elements for this report card. She said when the time was appropriate during the discussion of this agenda item, she would share information from that earlier discussion.

Mr. Pyle provided an overview of the items to be discussed. First, he presented a revised timeline, which indicated that the Board would reach consensus regarding additional elements for the school report card by July 22, 2015 as opposed to at this meeting as initially planned. He said the other pennants on the timeline remain the same. In addition, in the timeline there is an additional survey that will be done in the coming weeks to update some of the 2013 findings. In 2013, the department engaged the Center for Innovative Technology which brought in the Fors Marsh Research Group to conduct a survey process and a series of focus groups. The group facilitated five focus sessions, and 19 school divisions were represented. The study group was composed of more than 800 individuals. Slightly over half of the participants were parents and teachers, and administrators from around the state also participated. Some of the issues identified during this process were:

- Length of the report card
- Confusing data
- Lack of comparison features
- Lack of demographic context

Parent participants indicated that academic results (95%), class size (81%), curriculum and instruction (75%), graduation and dropouts (73%), discipline and safety (71%), post-secondary preparation (63%), student demographics (49%), and fiscal expenditures (41%) were important. From the focus groups, Mr. Pyle said they pulled some comments that Board members might find interesting:

- The approach to a report card should include the ability to select different topics or tabs.
- The report card should include an option that would allow the comparison of schools.

- Teachers were interested in having context so assessment results would not be seen in a vacuum.
- Lay users wanted to have ready access to definitions and other information that would help them understand the information in the report card.

The recommended elements for the report card include the following:

- Enrollment data
- Graduation and dropout rates
- High-level trend achievement data
- SAT participation data
- School climate and safety data
- Class-size data
- Parent survey data
- PALs data

Mr. Pyle presented full-sized versions of these snapshots and there were two-page and one-page templates developed. He said the Board asked staff last month to take a look at other state report cards that were highly rated. Report cards from Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, and Ohio were reviewed and information provided to the Board on each. He also provided a comparison of elements required by these states and said Virginia collects much of this data even though it is not currently on the report card. Mr. Pyle concluded his presentation by referring to a chart provided to the Board in the Board packet. The chart, *School Performance Report Card Elements*, includes three columns: Tool or Feature, States (including all of the states reviewed here), and Virginia availability.

At this point, Ms. Atkinson provided a summary of what took place at this morning's roundtable meeting. She said they had representatives from the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia School Boards Association, the Virginia Education Association, the Virginia Parent-Teacher Association, the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Just Children, the Virginia State Reading Association, and Fairfax County Public Schools. She said parents, educators, and the business community might be looking at different elements. One of the other issues she took away from the meeting is a look at the purpose of the report card. Ms. Atkinson said she thought the meeting was very useful.

Board discussion followed.

### **Public Comment**

Nicole Dooley was present on behalf of Just Children to comment on changes to the report card and to the SOA. She said they hope changes to the report card will help to share clear and useful information about school climate with parents and families, including information about suspension and expulsions, as well as school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement, and attendance as this information will provide a more

complete picture to families and communities regarding the schools their children attend. She also said they hope that consideration of these factors will be reflected within the changes to the SOA. It is critical that the state continues to recognize the importance of graduation rate accountability. She said they have heard from school board attorneys that graduation rate accountability has been the single biggest disincentive for schools to issue suspensions and expulsions, and they have seen dramatic increases in the graduation rate since accountability went into place. She said they request that the Board continues to recognize the importance of including the graduation rate on equal footing with test scores and other indicators for accrediting high schools.

She said they also recommend that the Board consider indicators, such as attendance, suspension rates, and referrals to law enforcement as they review the standards for accrediting elementary and middle schools. In 2011-2012, elementary school students in Virginia received over 16,000 suspensions. Ms. Dooley thanked the Board and said her organization looked forward to continuing to be a part of the process of improving school climate and achievement for Virginia's students.

### **Discussion of *Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia***

#### **Proposed Amendments for New Accreditation Ratings (Fast-Track) Review of Philosophy and Purpose Revision (Comprehensive Review) Preliminary Concepts (Comprehensive Review)**

Dr. Cynthia Cave, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, was the presenter for this agenda item. Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for student assessment and school improvement, was also available via telephone from another location.

Dr. Cave said the last time the committee met she discussed the fast-track regulatory process which will give the Board the opportunity to implement legislation passed during the 2012-2015 General Assembly sessions and that includes some of the legislation that addresses accreditation ratings. In last month's discussion, initially she had talked about including multiple years as permitted by HB 1674. However, since that legislation is permissive, it was decided to include that as part of the comprehensive review of the SOA. Today she said she is bringing to the Board proposed accreditation ratings in response to HB 1873 and SB 1320 which requires the Board to amend the SOA. These bills direct the Board to promulgate regulations establishing additional accreditation ratings that recognize the progress of schools that do not meet accreditation benchmarks but have significantly improved their pass rates, are within specified ranges of benchmarks, or have demonstrated significant student growth. She said what she is bringing before the Board today are recommendations from staff that we use a partial accreditation to recognize those schools that have achieved progress or that have achieved student growth or that fall within certain parameters. The proposal includes the designations *Partial Accreditation – Pass Rate Approaching Benchmark* and *Partial*

*Accreditation - Improving School.* She discussed the requirements for these designations.

Dr. Cave asked if the Board members had questions, and a Board member asked why the three-year program (HB 1674) discussed in May was taken out for this month's meeting. Dr. Cave explained that the language in the legislation was permissive so that issue was not included in this particular fast-track regulatory process. The Board will now have more time for consideration. Dr. Cave said the fast-track action needs to move forward because of legislative deadlines. Another Board member said she wanted to limit the fast-track action because there was not sufficient time for public input or in-depth discussion of the requirements of HB 1674 by the Board. Since it was a permissive component, she felt it was better to delay consideration so that the Board could consider this issue thoughtfully during the comprehensive review of the SOA.

The following questions were raised by and comments made by the Board members:

- A Board member had a technical question about how the language was written.
- A Board member had additional suggestions about the ratings and its subsets.
- A Board member had comments about the ratings and their components. Ms. Loving-Ryder provided clarification.
- A Board member said this will create a clear transparent delineation that will allow the public to understand the status of a school. She said some additional thought should be given to the category: Accreditation with Warning.

After some discussion, it was determined that the proposed accreditation categories would be:

- Fully Accredited
- Conditionally Accredited – New School
- Partially Accredited
- Accreditation Denied

All other categories would fall under Partially Accredited as subsets.

Dr. Cave said she and Ms. Loving will work to create a draft which reflects today's discussion. It was agreed that adjustments would be made for approval at the July Board meeting.

Dr. Cave then moved on to the next item. She said that, at the Board retreat and the May meeting, the Board discussed the philosophy that it wants the SOA to represent as a document that reflects improvement and progress; emphasizes that as schools move toward improvement, they will get support from the division; includes expectations for students that they will have not only academic knowledge, but workplace skills, social and emotional skills and are able to function not only in their own communities, but understand a global perspective; and ensures that students are engaged and responsible for their own learning. In addition, the Board has said that there are some things that people need to be aware of and able to track. Therefore, the SOA should provide the means to do that. She said the draft presented today is a reflection of the

items the Board has emphasized. Dr. Cave went through the draft and the language added.

The following questions were raised by and comments made by the Board members:

- A Board member commented about the social and emotional competencies as she does not believe the work has been done to address that issue yet at the state level. Dr. Staples said as they moved through the retreat, they began to talk about specific changes in the standards and then several said we needed to have a comprehensive review of how the philosophy and goals align with the details under accreditation. This is clearly part of the comprehensive review which is further down the road, but the intent is to have the conversation early enough so that it informs some of the details to be discussed later.
- Another Board member said she was looking for a one or two page document that in plain language, easily understood by everyone, stated the goal for students and staff in Virginia. She was looking for a short, but clear statement that would clearly explain to anyone what we are trying to do in Virginia. She said she is looking for a mission statement.
- Another Board member discussed other recommendations to the proposed language and asked that it be put in simpler language.
- A Board member asked that we not include the term *21<sup>st</sup> Century* in any of this because the demands in the community and workplace will be so different. Civic responsibility also needs to be included.
- A Board member said she believes all children are gifted in a variety of ways and we set the expectations mark too low. In every school we have forgotten young people who may be regular students. We must lay out the expectations that those children will be challenged and engaged. We must lay this out in a way that the school divisions will know what they mean.

The document will be revised and brought back to the committee for further review.

Dr. Cave then addressed diploma seals and proposed amendments to the SOA. Staff recommended that this section of the regulation be streamlined to remove the specific criteria for each diploma seal and that such criteria be included in guidelines adopted by the Board. She also discussed the format used in this case and asked if this is a format the committee wanted to use in the discussion of regulations.

The following questions were raised by and comments made by the Board members:

- A Board member asked if other states have seals like this and, if so, do they include them in regulations. Dr. Cave said she would research that issue. Another Board member added that she would like to see fiscal impact addressed.
- A Board member said she believes that question would be addressed as we go through the regulatory process.
- Another Board member said under justification there should be a rationale as well as a section that addresses unintended consequences.
- A Board member spoke to some of the possible unintended consequences.

Dr. Staples said this change has no fiscal impact.

Ms. Atkinson said there were no other recommendations regarding this agenda item.

### **Concluding Remarks and Adjournment**

Ms. Atkinson expressed her appreciation for the work that has been done and acknowledged that this is the last meeting for Mr. Braunlich. The meeting then adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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